



HINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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July 31, 2020

Good Evening HPS Community,

As promised, attached please find summary slides of the **preliminary** reopening plan that was submitted by our team to DESE earlier this evening. Our planning process has been guided by a vigilant monitoring of public health data in Massachusetts, with the input of key stakeholders. The Commonwealth's careful and disciplined approach to the reopening of Massachusetts has enabled our state to progress through reopening phases, in part because of strong compliance with health and safety precautions. It is our intent to reopen the Hingham Public Schools with a similarly deliberate phased approach.

As you have heard, the Massachusetts Department of Education has directed districts to submit a preliminary plan today that addresses the feasibility of three options for serving students at the start of the school year. Those options included a full return to daily, in-person attendance, a hybrid plan combining in-school learning with some remote learning, and finally, a 100% remote learning program. Our final plan, which will be approved by the Hingham School Committee, is due to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by August 10. Given the significant changes reopening plans necessitate in the way schools operate, we also must negotiate our proposal with all impacted employee unions. We are on a very tight timeline—less than two weeks until the August 10 deadline set by the DESE for submitting final fall plans.

In order to adhere to the school re-opening guidance provided by DESE, consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Pediatric Association, we have concluded that we cannot safely meet physical distancing requirements with all students and staff in the buildings at the same time. However, we do believe we can make significant changes in our school schedules and operating procedures to make a partial return to in-person learning on a hybrid basis both safe and successful. To this end, the District has created a four-phase reopening plan to safely bring staff and students back to school. This plan will require strategies to ensure physical distancing, as well as a series of other critical health and safety measures such as wearing face coverings, washing hands frequently, cleaning

and sanitizing facilities, screening regularly for symptoms of illness, and staying home from school when sick, among others. Our planning process includes a comprehensive set of strategies and investments to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus.

As a result, we will pursue a phased-in remote/hybrid learning plan, which enables us first to bring a subset of students in greatest need of in-person instruction and support, particularly students with disabilities, back to school every day. Other students may attend in person in small groups and in distanced settings with all other precautions in place. When students are not attending in-person sessions, the district will provide a robust remote learning program. After a successful initial phase of opening, accompanied by positive health metrics, the district will evaluate the potential of bringing additional students back into school buildings on a hybrid basis, combining in person instruction with a robust remote learning program on the days students are not scheduled to be physically in school. We do understand that some families may have risk factors or a level of discomfort that may cause them elect to have their child participate in fully remote learning. A fully remote option will be available to families who choose it.

Of course, we know that under normal circumstances, students are best served in schools every day, interacting with their peers and engaged in live classroom learning. While our educators and families worked incredibly hard last spring to implement remote learning under emergency conditions, we know that the abrupt school closure presented enormous challenges and remote learning did not fully serve all students. Our goal and pledge for 2020-2021 is to ensure that each and every student safely achieves a full year of academic and personal growth. Though this school year will look different, I remain confident in the ability of our educators and administrators to adapt our educational program to best serve our student needs during the COVID crisis.

We recognize that the circumstances of every family and staff member are different, and that no plan ultimately will satisfy everyone in our community. But rest assured that we are working diligently to explore every option available to us, that we remain guided by the science to keep our students and staff safe and healthy, and that we will be prepared to make adjustments along the way if the public health conditions or other variables change.

As we move closer to a final plan, we welcome input and feedback from all of our stakeholders. We invite you to share your questions, comments, and ideas to help inform and strengthen our plans. For this, the School Committee has planned three community forums to be held on Wednesday, August 5th at 9:30am, 4:30pm, and 7:00pm. To ensure that we address as many questions as possible, please send questions and comments to Libby Lewiecki, School Committee Community Outreach Chair, at llewiecki@hinghamschools.org by Monday, August 3, 2020 at 5:00 PM.

We will keep you informed about our progress in developing a final plan and will continue to post updates on our various media outlets. Thanks to the work of more than 100 teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders, I am confident that we can prioritize both safety and learning as we prepare for the start of a successful school year. Thank you for your patience and cooperation in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Paul Austin, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Important Dates:

Wednesday, August 5th: Community Forums

Forum 1: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

Dial-in number: 1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 896 7476 5620

Website: <https://zoom.us/join>

Forum 2: 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Dial-in number: 1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 838 7872 3365

Website: <https://zoom.us/join>

Forum 3: 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Dial-in number: 1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 840 3948 4679

Website: <https://zoom.us/join>

Thursday, August 6th: School Committee Meeting

Dial-in number: 1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 861 7127 4829

Website: <https://zoom.us/join>